

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management**

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**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**Big Horn Rural Electric Company Power Line and  
Ten Sleep Solid Waste Water Pipeline Rights-of-way**

**June 2016**



**PREPARING OFFICE**

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Worland Field Office

# Environmental Assessment

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## *Introduction*

### **Identifying Information**

#### **Title, EA number, and type of project:**

Big Horn Rural Electric Company Power Line and Ten Sleep Solid Waste Water Pipeline Rights-of-way

DOI-BLM-WY-R010-2016-0018-EA

Type of Project: Rights-of-way Power Line and Water Pipeline Applications

#### **General Location of Proposed Action:**

Sixth Principal Meridian, Wyoming

T. 47 N., R. 88 W.,

sec. 21, lots 7 and 9, NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ .

#### **Name and Location of Preparing Office:**

Worland Field Office

101 S. 23<sup>rd</sup> St.

Worland, WY 82401

#### **Lease/Serial/Case file number:**

WYW-165347, WYW-165348

#### **Applicant Name:**

Big Horn Rural Electric Company (WYW-165347)

Ten Sleep Solid Waste District (WYW-165348)

#### **Background Information:**

Big Horn Rural Electric Company (BHREA) has submitted a SF 299 Amendment Application and Plan of Development (POD) to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Worland Field Office proposing to construct a 14.4 kV Overhead/Underground single phase distribution power line to serve the Ten Sleep Solid Waste Transfer Station south of Ten Sleep ROW, serial number WYW-165347, located in Washakie County, Wyoming.

The power line would include 1,870.0 feet in length, 25 feet in width, involving a total ROW of 1.073 acres, more or less.

Ten Sleep Solid Waste District (TSSWD) has submitted a SF 299 Amendment Application and Plan of Development (POD) to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Worland Field Office proposing to construct a 3" buried water pipeline to serve the Ten Sleep Solid Waste Transfer Station south of Ten Sleep ROW, serial number WYW-165348, located in Washakie County, Wyoming.

The water pipeline would include 2,288.0 feet in length, 25 feet in width, involving a total ROW of 1.313 acres, more or less.

The proposed activities would occur on lands administered by the BLM, Worland Field Office. Construction activities are planned for the summer of 2016, or as soon as required approvals are obtained.

### **Purpose and Need for Action:**

The need for the right-of-way action is established by the BLM's responsibility under Title V of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as Amended (FLPMA) to respond to a request for a right-of-way (ROW) grant and to ensure the activity protects the natural resources of public lands and prevents unnecessary or undue degradation. The purpose of the proposed action is for the BLM to respond to the request.

### **Decision to be made:**

The Authorized Officer (AO) must determine whether or not to approve the rights-of-way grants and thus grant authorization of the power line and water pipeline across public lands. The AO could decide not to issue the grants if it would cause unnecessary or undue degradation to the public lands, or if it would threaten to violate another Federal law.

If it is decided to issue the grants, the AO must decide what Terms and Conditions, would apply to the grants. Terms and Conditions could include specification of construction, design, mitigation measures, and abandonment/reclamation activities for the proposed project area.

Finally, the AO must determine whether or not the proposed action could result in significant impact to the human environment. If not, this determination would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). If the impacts could be significant, an environmental impact statement would be necessary.

### **Conformance**

This plan has been reviewed to determine if the proposed action conforms to the land use plan as required by 43 CFR 1610.5. The proposed action conforms to the Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan for Worland dated September 21, 2015. The decisions in the Worland Resource Management Plan (WRMP) provide overall management direction for resources on BLM-administered land in the Worland Field Office, Wyoming.

The Worland RMP (pgs 107-109) delineates right-of-way corridors, right-of-way avoidance areas, right-of-way exclusion area, and areas available for right-of-way. The Worland RMP states that the BLM

would manage public lands to meet transportation and ROW needs by providing opportunities to meet ROW demands while protecting important resources.

The primary goal for managing Rights-of-way and Corridors in the Worland Management Area, is to manage the public lands to meet transportation and ROW needs consistent with goals and objectives of other resources. Objectives of this goal include, provide opportunities to meet ROW demands while protecting important resources and maintain a transportation management system in cooperation with appropriate state and local agencies to meet public and resource management needs.

The Proposed Action is in conformance with the following management actions from the RMP, and their application meets the goals and objectives for Rights-of-way and Corridors.

6023, The preferred location of new ROW will be in or adjacent to existing disturbed areas associated with existing ROW or high traffic gravel roads or highways, where possible.

6029, Manage 1,767,274 acres as ROW avoidance areas (Map 3-24). Manage PHMAs as ROW avoidance areas for new ROW or SUA permits (799,391 acres). Within PHMAs where new ROWs/SUAs are necessary, locate new ROWs/SUAs within designated RMP corridors or adjacent to existing ROWs/SUAs where technically feasible. Subject to valid existing rights, including non-federal land inholdings, locate new, required ROWs/SUAs adjacent to existing ROWs/SUAs or where impacts to Greater Sage-Grouse are minimized. Work with proponents to design ROW applications to protect Greater Sage-Grouse.

In addition to those management actions specific to Rights-of-way and Corridors and lands and realty, the Proposed Action also conforms to the following management actions to protect other important resources.

#### Common to All

0001 - Surface-disturbing activities are subject to the Wyoming BLM Mitigation Guidelines for Surface-Disturbing and Disruptive Activities, the Wyoming BLM Reclamation Policy, and the Wyoming DEQ-WQD's Storm Water Permitting Program.

#### Air, Soils, and Water

1005 - BLM actions will conform with Wyoming DEQ Air Quality Standards and Regulations through application of BMPs and other measures consistent with resource goals and objectives.

1007 - Use BMPs to reduce runoff, soil erosion, and sediment yield, and to retain water on the landscape.

1010 - Allow surface-disturbing activities on fragile soils, biological crusts, soils with low reclamation potential, and soils with highly erosive characteristics on a case-by-case basis.

1014 – 1022 – Describe requirements to attain successful reclamation through seeding, erosion control, and soils handling.

1031 – Control water runoff from disturbed or developed sites and control soil erosion to appropriate rates for natural conditions through the Wyoming Storm Water Discharge Program using appropriate BMPs and technologies.

## Invasive Species

4037 - Manage invasive plant species in the planning area in conjunction with local counties and other stakeholders consistent with the ROD for the Final PEIS addressing Vegetation Treatments

Using Herbicides on BLM Lands in 17 Western States, and current with policy and similar guidance updated over time.

4038 - Manage invasive plant species using an Integrated Pest Management approach consistent with DOI Manual 517, Integrated Pest Management.

4041 - Use certified noxious weed-seed free vegetation products on all BLM-administered land in the planning area.

## Cultural and Paleontological Resources

5008 - Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as amended, the National Programmatic Agreement (BLM, ACHP, and National Conference of SHPO 2012), and the State Protocol (BLM and Wyoming SHPO 2014), case-by-case reviews for specific undertakings require analysis and assessments of effects. Such analysis and assessment may reveal the need for additional restrictions beyond those specifically described in this RMP.

5015 - Surface-disturbing activities associated with the construction and use of sites and facilities are subject to appropriate mitigation developed through implementation of the National Programmatic Agreement (BLM, ACHP, and National Conference of SHPOs 2012) and the State Protocol (BLM and Wyoming SHPO 2014).

5027- Protect vertebrate and scientifically significant paleontological resources on BLM-administered land from proposed surface-disturbing activities that could damage or destroy these resources.

5028 - Avoid surface-disturbing activities in areas in the immediate vicinity of scientifically significant paleontological resource sites.

## Visual Resources

5046 - Manage visual resources in accordance with VRM class objectives.

5047 - Meet the VRM objectives before authorizing land uses that may affect the visual character of the landscape.

## **Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Plans or Other Environmental Analysis:**

This Environmental Assessment (EA) is prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA) and complies with applicable regulations and laws passed subsequent to the Act. In addition, this EA is prepared utilizing the stipulations and format outlined in the BLM NEPA Handbook H-1790-1 (BLM 1988). The Proposed Action and alternatives would comply with relevant federal, state, and local regulations, plans, and policies.

Title V of FLPMA, sec. 501. [43 U.S.C. 1761] (a) The Secretary, with respect to the public lands (including public lands, as defined in section 103(e) of this Act, which are reserved from entry pursuant to section 24 of the Federal Power Act (16 U.S.C. 818)) [P.L. 102-486, 1992] and, the Secretary of Agriculture, with respect to lands within the National Forest System (except in each case land designated as wilderness), are authorized to grant, issue, or renew rights-of-way over, upon, under, or through such lands for– (1) reservoirs, canals, ditches, flumes, laterals, pipes, pipelines, tunnels, and other facilities and systems for the impoundment, storage, transportation, or distribution of water; (4) systems for generation, transmission, and distribution of electric energy, except that the applicant shall also comply with all applicable requirements of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission under the Federal Power Act, including part 1 thereof (41 Stat. 1063; 16 USC 791a-825r)[PL 102-486,1992]; (7) such other necessary transportation or other systems or facilities which are in the public interest and which require rights-of-way over, upon, under, or through such lands.

43 CFR §2800 It is BLM's objective to grant rights-of-way under the regulations in this part to any qualified individual, business, or government entity and to direct and control the use of rights-of-way on public lands in a manner that:

- (a) Protects the natural resources associated with public lands and adjacent lands, whether private or administered by a government entity;
- (b) Prevents unnecessary or undue degradation to public lands;
- (c) Promotes the use of rights-of-way in common considering engineering and technological compatibility, national security, and land use plans; and
- (d) Coordinates, to the fullest extent possible, all BLM actions under the regulations in this part with state and local governments, interested individuals, and appropriate quasi-public entities.

## Scoping, Public Involvement and Issues:

### Scoping

The rights-of-way applications were received by the Worland Field Office on November 9, 2015 (power line, serial number WYW-165347) and January 25, 2016 (water pipeline, serial number WYW-165348) and were considered complete on June 3, 2016. Based on the size and routine nature of the proposed project, it was determined that external scoping was not necessary. Notification of preparation of this EA was also provided on the ePlanning NEPA register (<https://eplanning.blm.gov/>

epl-front-office/eplanning/projectSummary.do?methodName=renderDefaultProjectSummary&

projectId=61500) on May 9, 2016. Staff specialists reviewed the proposal and identified impacts and appropriate mitigation measures.

## Issues Identified

Cultural Resources: How would the proposed surface disturbance affect cultural resources eligible or unevaluated for the NRHP?

Paleontological Resources: How would the proposed surface disturbance affect significant paleontological localities?

## *Proposed Action and Alternatives*

### **Description of the No Action Alternative:**

No Action implies that on-going development and activities would be allowed to continue in the area, but the proposed action would be disallowed. Additional actions would be considered by the BLM on a case-by-case basis.

### **Description of the Proposed Action:**

The Proposed Action would consider the rights-of-way applications complete, and BLM would consider whether to approve the ROWs as submitted with special terms and conditions consistent with 43 CFR 2805.12, as well as specific mitigation and monitoring measures for the proposed project area, which may be defined through the NEPA analysis.

The proposed location has been surveyed and staked by Donnell & Allred, Inc. An onsite of the location was conducted on April 1, 2016 with the following people in attendance:

Connie Craft	BLM
Leslie Coleman	BLM
Jesse Frisbee	Donnell & Allred, Inc.

### **Power Line**

BHREA has submitted a SF 299 Application and Plan of Development (POD) to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Worland Field Office proposing to construct a 14.4 kV OH/UG single phase distribution power line ROW, serial number WYW-165347 to provide electrical service to Ten Sleep Solid Waste District transfer station, located in Washakie County, Wyoming. The requested ROW is 1,870.0 feet in length, 25 feet in width; involving a total of 1.073 acres more or less. The overhead segment would span the width of Hwy 434 and extend on to public land and consist of installation of (1) treated wood pole, 100 feet in length, 25 feet in width and transition to an underground line buried to a depth of 4 feet, to parallel the north side of Juniper Road for 1,770.0 feet in length, 25 feet in width to the landfill.

Construction would consist of one full treated wood pole with necessary anchors, guys, insulation and hardware to support two #2 ACSR conductors in a manner suitable for raptor protection. Trench excavation for conductor installation would be to a depth of four feet. Appurtenant equipment necessary for an underground distribution line would consist of four foot high fiberglass markers every 150-200 yards. Meter will be read remotely via PLC, no additional communication equipment will be necessary.



During construction, the Proponent plans to clear the surface in preparation for trenching. Topsoil will be windrowed or bladed aside to a six inch minimum for use during reclamation. The conductor would be placed in the trench and covered with approximately four feet of cover. Proponent plans to use existing roads for access. Construction activity and ground disturbance would be limited to approved, staked areas. Whenever possible, grading would be limited to help preserve vegetation, reduce/limit erosion and improve reclamation success. Equipment to be used includes company line trucks and small backhoe to install the line. BHREA would use a three man crew and contractor for the trench. Construction should be completed within a few weeks following the start of construction and reclamation would follow construction. No additional work outside of the right-of-way would be required.

#### Construction standards:

- BHREA is proposing design and constructions specifications to follow the RUS standards for typical single phase power line rated at 14.4 kV in a heavy ice loading district. We will meet or exceed all National Electric Code requirements in regards to clearance, height, wind, and ice loading. Construction will only include structures and units approved by the RUS.
- Mitigation measures for this project include stipulations for: overhead and buried power lines (standard stipulations with trenching requirements); and site-specific seeding mixture stipulations (Sandy seed mixture).
- The power line would not be constructed using frozen material or during periods when the soil material is saturated or when watershed damage is likely to occur.
- Surface disturbing activities and maintenance would conform to standards outlined in the BLM and Forest Service publication: Surface Operating Standards and Guidelines for Oil and Gas Exploration and Development, The Gold Book, Fourth Edition (2007) and BLM Manual Section 9113.
- The holder shall be responsible for prevention and control of noxious weeds and weeds of concern on all areas of surface disturbance associated with the right-of-way. Use of pesticides shall comply with the applicable Federal and State laws. Pesticides shall be used only in accordance with their registered uses and within limitations imposed by the Secretary of Interior. Prior to the use of pesticides on public land, the holder shall obtain from the BLM authorized officer written approval of a plan showing the type and quantity of material to be used, pest(s) to be controlled, method of application, location of storage and disposal of containers, and any other information deemed necessary by the authorized officer to such use.
- BHREA will keep the power line and associated equipment in safe and useable condition at all times. Standards from the National Electrical Safety Code will be used to determine the condition of the power line. Periodic inspections and routine maintenance will be performed as needed to keep the power line in safe and useable condition.

#### Water Pipeline

Ten Sleep Solid Waste District (TSSWD) has submitted a SF 299 Amendment Application and Plan of Development (POD) to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Worland Field Office proposing to construct a 3" buried water pipeline beginning at Town of Ten Sleep water main located on state lands adjacent to the northeast of Hwy 434 across public lands to serve the Ten Sleep Solid Waste Transfer Station south of Ten Sleep ROW, serial number WYW-165348, located in Washakie County, Wyoming.

The water pipeline would include 2,288.0 feet in length, 25 feet in width, involving a total ROW of 1.313 acres, more or less.

Construction would be conventional trench excavation for pipeline installation buried to a depth of six feet. Construction equipment would consist of a small backhoe loader to dig and backfill the trench. The pipeline would have an anticipated maximum pressure of 60 psi with a three inch SDR-17 HDPE fused pipe or SDR-21 PVC pipe. Ancillary to the pipeline, a booster pump would be installed on the TSSWD property to boost the pressure to normal to adequately serve the required facilities.

During construction, the Proponent plans to clear the surface in preparation for trenching. Topsoil will be windrowed or bladed aside to a six inch minimum for use during reclamation. The water pipeline would be placed in the trench and covered with approximately six feet of cover. Proponent plans to use existing roads for access. Construction activity and ground disturbance would be limited to approved, staked areas. Whenever possible, grading would be limited to help preserve vegetation, reduce/limit erosion and improve reclamation success. Construction should be completed within 10 days following the start of construction. Equipment storage and staging areas will be on TSSWD property. No additional work outside of the right-of-way would be required.

#### **Construction standards:**

- Proponent shall stockpile topsoil from trenching activities and fill in the pipeline trench immediately after constructing the project; mitigation measures for this project include standard stipulations with trenching requirements. Re-seeding shall take place in conformance with standard practices and site-specific seeding mixture stipulations (Sandy seed mixture).
- All design, material, and construction, operation, maintenance, and termination practices shall be in accordance with safe and proven engineering practices.
- Surface disturbing activities and maintenance would conform to standards outlined in the BLM and Forest Service publication: Surface Operating Standards and Guidelines for Oil and Gas Exploration and Development, The Gold Book, Fourth Edition (2007) and BLM Manual Section 9113.
- With the overall objective of minimizing surface disturbance and retaining land stability, the TSSWD shall utilize equipment that is appropriate to the scope and scale of work being done for construction of the water pipeline (utilize equipment no larger than needed for the job).
- The pipeline would not be constructed using frozen material or during periods when the soil material is saturated or when watershed damage is likely to occur.
- The holder shall be responsible for prevention and control of noxious weeds and weeds of concern on all areas of surface disturbance associated with the right-of-way. Use of pesticides shall comply with the applicable Federal and State laws. Pesticides shall be used only in accordance with their registered uses and within limitations imposed by the Secretary of Interior. Prior to the use of pesticides on public land, the holder shall obtain from the BLM authorized officer written approval of a plan showing the type and quantity of material to be used, pest(s) to be controlled, method of application, location of storage and disposal of containers, and any other information deemed necessary by the authorized officer to such use.
- The right of way will be monitored on a regular basis as employees and patrons access the transfer station.

### Summary of Proposed Acreage:

Implementation of the proposed action would result in surface disturbance. The proposed action would include overlapping disturbances for the proposed rights-of-way on BLM surface lands as shown below:

**Table 1 Estimated Surface Disturbance (Acres)**

Right-of-way	Power Line/ Water Pipeline right-of-way length	Power Line/ Water Pipeline right-of-way width	Acres
WYW-165347/ WYW-165348	1870.0'	25'	1.073
WYW-165348	418.0'	25'	0.239
Total Surface Disturbance			1.31

**Table 2 Right-of Ways (Acres)**

Right-of-way	Power Line/Water Pipeline 25' right-of-way width	Acres
WYW- 165347	25' x 1870.0'	1.073 acres
WYW- 165348	25' x 2288.0'	1.313 acres
Total Acreage for Rights-of-Way		2.386

\*New Surface Disturbance Included in Table 1

## *Affected Environment and Environmental Effects*

This chapter characterizes the resources and uses that have the potential to be affected by the proposed action, followed by a comparative analysis of the direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of the alternatives. Direct effects are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place. Indirect effects are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable. Cumulative impacts result from the incremental impacts of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions.

### **General Setting and Geographic Scope of the project area**

The project is located 1 mile south of Ten Sleep, Washakie County, Wyoming. The ecological site in the area of the proposed power line and pipeline range from sandy to loamy. Topography varies from gently rolling or flat areas with a saltbrush, sage brush, and perennial grass vegetative community. The proposed project would be located adjacent to an existing fiber optic cable and gravel road, other uses include hunting and recreation. The elevation is approximately 4500 feet and has an annual precipitation of approximately 13.3 inches.

### **Resources Not Analyzed**

Resources and features not present or not effected by the proposed action or alternatives, and not discussed in this EA, include: Environmental Justice, Prime or Unique Farmlands, Flood Plains, Native American Religious Concerns, riparian areas, Recreation and Visual Resource Management; Special Designations (Including ACECs, Class I visual management areas, Class I Airsheds, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Wetlands, Wilderness Values or Inventoried Lands with Wilderness Characteristics), Land Use/Access, Air Quality, Geology and Mineral Resources, Vegetation, Threatened and Endangered, BLM Special Status Plant Species, Invasive, Non Native Species Noxious Weeds, Range, Soils, Water Resources, Fish/Wildlife (Including Threatened, Endangered, Candidate and BLM Sensitive Species, Socioeconomics, Wastes, Hazardous or Solid, Fuels, or Forests.

### **Resources Carried Forward for Analysis**

#### **Cultural Resources, Traditional Cultural Properties, Native American Religious Concerns**

Issue(s) Identified

How would the proposed surface disturbance affect cultural resources eligible or unevaluated for the NRHP?

Affected Environment

The area of potential effect (APE) is defined by the Wyoming State Protocol Agreement between the BLM and the SHPO (State Protocol) as the geographic area or areas within which an undertaking may directly or indirectly cause alterations in the character or use of historic properties (cultural resources eligible or unevaluated for the National Register of Historic Places), if any such properties exist. The APE is influenced by the scale and nature of an undertaking and may be different for different kinds of effects caused by the undertaking.

The APE defined for the current undertaking includes the proposed surface disturbance. The rights-of-way (ROWs) authorize approximately 2.386 acres for the pipeline (WYW-165348, 1.313 acres) and power line (WYW-165347, 1.073). The total estimated surface disturbance is 1.31 acres, including 0.239 and 1.073 respectively. The APE, entirely within an estimated 160.0 acres previously inventoried at the Class III level (BLM #1598038Y, 1509077Y, and 1509096Y), contains one historic site that is not eligible for NRHP. No historic property will be affected.

#### Direct and Indirect Effects

##### No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed action would not occur. No resulting effects on cultural resources would be expected to occur beyond the current situation.

##### Proposed Action

No historic properties were identified within the project's APE. Surface disturbance resulting from the proposed action, approximately 1.31 acres, would have no effect on known historic properties. As with the No Action alternative, the Proposed Action will have no effect on known historic properties. Unknown cultural resources may be affected by surface disturbing activities. For the protection of unknown cultural resources the standard cultural stipulations apply and are included in the terms and conditions.

##### Mitigation

As described in the Proposed Action, unknown cultural resources may be affected by surface disturbing activities. For the protection of unknown cultural resources the standard cultural stipulations apply and are included in the terms and conditions.

The standard cultural stipulations include measures for mitigating adverse effects discovered during surface disturbing activities.

##### Cumulative Effects

Construction and development of rights-of-way (including pipelines and power lines) impact cultural resources through ground disturbance, unauthorized collection, and visual intrusion of the setting of historic properties. Potential impacts to historic properties are mitigated under the Proposed Action. Since there would be no direct or indirect effects on known historic properties, there can be no cumulative effects.

## Paleontological Resources

### Issue(s) Identified

How would the proposed surface disturbance affect significant paleontological localities?

### Affected Environment

Project is within an area of soil development and vegetation growth with low potential for significant fossils. The underlying fossil bearing formation, which has a high sensitivity for significant localities, will not be affected.

## *Tribes, Individuals, Organizations, or Agencies Consulted:*

### **List of Persons, Agencies and Organizations Consulted**

Name	Purpose & Authorities for Consultation or Coordination
Mary Hopkins, SHPO	Section 106 of NHPA & State Protocol
Kendal Wambeke Jeff Umphlett	Big Horn Rural Electric Company
Jesse Frisbee	Donnell and Allred

### **List of Preparers**

Name	Title
Dora Ridenour	Archaeologist
Karen Hepp	Range Management Specialist (T&E/Sensitive Plants)
Ted Igleheart	Wildlife Biologist
Jim Critz	Civil Engineer
Adam Babcock	Recreation/Visual Specialist
Cam Henrichsen	Range Management Specialist
Leslie Coleman	Natural Resource Specialist, Invasive Species and Soils
Jared Dalebout	Hydrologist
Connie Craft	Realty Specialist
Darci Stafford	Natural Resource Specialist, Fluid Minerals
Eve Warren	Natural Resource Specialist, Fire Ecology
Joe Scyphers	Geologist
Jim Gates	Forester
Franklin Sanders	Petroleum Engineer
Holly Elliott	Planning & Environmental Coordinator

Ameila Pennington	Assistant Field Manager, Lands and Minerals
John Elliott	Assistant Field Manager, Resources